



PO Box 614
Hotchkiss, CO 81419

DATE: June 19, 2019

Rep. Alan Lowenthal, Chair
Rep. Paul Gosar, Ranking Member
House Subcommittee on Energy and Minerals
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Reps Lowenthal and Gosar:

On behalf of Valley Organic Growers Association we are writing to offer our support for the Restoring Community Input and Public Protections in Oil and Gas Leasing Act of 2019, HR 3225.

Valley Organic Growers Association is a membership based non profit organization focused on promoting sustainable agriculture in Western Colorado. Founded in 1992, we have over 120 members that produce vegetables, fruit, wine, meat, dairy products, eggs, flowers, wool, and value added products such as jam, prepared meals, and canned foods. We depend on the clean water that runs through the North Fork of the Gunnison River in order to irrigate our organic farms and provide water to our livestock. As an organization we focus on agricultural education, farm tours, promoting our members, and protecting our beautiful agricultural land so that our farmers can continue to thrive for many generations.

Oil and gas leasing and development carries with it many potential impacts that bring risks to our local farmers, ranchers, orchardists, vintners, and agricultural related businesses, including loss of public land access, potential for industrial development that directly displaces and disrupts other uses and current economic activity including hunting, recreation, livestock grazing, and secure wildlife habitat.

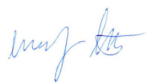
In order to properly and fully consider these things, adequate time is necessary to properly consider proposed oil and gas leases, to allow our members time to offer input and information, and to provide meaningful comment to the relevant land management agencies. This is why we support HR 3225.

In particular we support provisions for greater time for public and stakeholder input, shorter lease terms to ensure the agency is always using the best, most current information, and the requirement that other resources be given proper consideration when deciding which of our public lands are suitable for this activity and which are best managed for the many other public and environmental benefits they offer.

Our public lands are very important to Valley Organic Growers Association and our farmers and we both appreciate and expect the opportunity to participate fully in their management. HR 3225 is important legislation that would better ensure that farmers, ranchers, community members and agricultural organizations such as VOGA are able to provide that input and to better ensure the needs of our growers and food producers are being met.

Thank you for your consideration, and we urge that this subcommittee support and mark up this legislation, and to support its passage into law.

Respectfully,



Emily Hartnett
Board President, Valley Organic Growers Association
PO Box 614, Hotchkiss, CO 81419
vogaco@gmail.com